

**Savannah River Site
Citizens Advisory Board**

Recommendation #302

Contingency Budget Planning Input for Severe Budget Cases

Background

With the coming of the next election cycle, and the existing Spartan budget climate, it seems entirely plausible that the Site could be faced with severe and deep budget cuts. In the view of the CAB, the Site may have to assess priorities in an unprecedented manner.

The CAB has consistently indicated to DOE that our top priority is addressing cleanup activities related to the liquid radioactive waste system. The CAB has also indicated strong support for processing of the Spent Nuclear Fuel (presently stored and being increased by continuous incoming foreign and domestic shipment for the next few years). We also recognize that to keep this high priority activity ongoing it will be necessary to maintain the integrated production system operable which includes:

- H-Canyon processing
- Waste Tank processing activities
- Interim Salt Waste Processing Activities
- Construction and Operation of Salt Waste Processing Facility
- Continued operation of the Defense Waste Processing Facility.

Each of these individual systems listed above have surprisingly high costs even if operated at minimum safe operating conditions (safe, stable condition with no production throughput) compared to full operations. For example, the minimum safe operating condition costs for H-Canyon is on the order of \$150 M per year while full operations conditions increase these costs to \$170 M per year. Full operations costs over non-operating costs are a modest 13 percent increase. It is quite likely that the same relative costs for the other facilities listed above have comparable ratios of full operations to minimum safe operations costs.

Discussion

The CAB continues to reaffirm that we support dealing with all aspects of cleanup in the manner much as you have proposed in the plans set forth in FY 2011 and FY 2012, as well as earlier years. We also understand that we are making some input on hypothetical conditions that we hope will never come to reality. However, if deep cuts do occur, we encourage a “risk-based” approach to cleanup, and in our view, that would include dealing with High Level Waste and Spent Nuclear Fuel first. This condition suggests that if faced with deep budget cuts we would encourage that these critical facilities be kept in some ongoing operational status. In no scenario would it be cost-effective in our view to keep these facilities in minimum safe operating condition as opposed to full operations.

These views are expressed in light of the well-known condition that “the SRS High Level Liquid Waste represents the largest hazard in the state of South Carolina.” We feel that continually addressing this high risk radioactive waste should be maintained even if some other creditable environmental cleanup activities are impacted. We feel that no good purpose would ever be served by maintaining these facilities noted above in any minimum safe operating condition for any significant time period. The risks are real and the stakes too high to ever deal with these hazards without giving it our best effort as we have consistently done in past years.

Recommendation:

The Savannah River Site Citizens Advisory Board recommends that DOE:

1. Assess the contingency budget input provided herein and commit to dealing with the cleanup consistent with emphasis on production extending from used nuclear fuel processing through production of high level waste canisters.

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Adopted October 30, 2012

Co-sponsored by the Nuclear Materials Committee and Strategic & Legacy Management Committee